

## LD 1350 – An Act To Expand Maine’s Clean Energy Economy

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Honorable Committee Chairs Senator Lawrence & Representative Berry and Members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on *LD 1350 – An Act to Expand Maine’s Clean Energy Economy*.

Acadia Center is a non-profit, research and advocacy organization incorporated in Maine and committed to advancing the clean energy future by offering real-world solutions to the climate crisis. Acadia Center tackles complex problems, identifies clear recommendations for reforms, and advocates to create significant change that supports a low-carbon economy across the Northeast which can then be a model for application elsewhere. Acadia Center identifies regional, state, and local improvements that will dramatically reduce carbon pollution and improve quality of life throughout the Northeastern United States.

### Acadia Center supports LD 1350.

A February 2021 report by the Governor’s Energy Office, entitled “*State of Maine Renewable Energy Goals Market Assessment*,” and a November 2020 GEO report, entitled, “*Strengthening Maine’s Clean Energy Economy*,” both hold up the State’s renewable energy sector as a source of economic and energy growth opportunities. Maine’s renewable portfolio standard (RPS) is a critical tool in achieving the requirement for 80% of Maine’s electricity to come from renewable resources by 2030 and goal of having 100% of Maine’s electricity served by renewables by 2050. In addition, the electric sector is expected to support rapid load growth due to electrification of end uses, especially in the transportation and building sectors, to help meet the state’s greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals. The reports have several findings and recommendations, including the following:

- The renewable energy sector, including wind and solar, represents one of the fastest growing sectors in the country.
- Renewable power policy changes over the last couple of years have spurred solar development and investments, new jobs, and other benefits.
- Our Northeastern neighbors, including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York, have leveraged the renewable energy sector to their advantage and Maine has multiple opportunities to do the same, enhancing its competitive advantage with other states looking to attract additional clean energy investments.
- Maine has some of the boldest clean energy policies in the country, including its RPS.
- Maine is on track to meet its near-term RPS requirement through 2026 but new resources will need to be online to meet increasing goals thereafter.
- Transmission will be a key driver of renewable development.
- Energy equity considerations cut across four dimensions - resource diversity, customer-sited resources, geographic resource distribution, and cost – and are critical factors to consider in new clean energy development.

Since 1999, Maine's renewable energy policies have grown stronger. In 2019, Governor Janet Mills signed landmark legislation mandating that Maine reduce greenhouse gas emissions 45% below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80% by 2050; developed an Executive Order committing the state to a carbon-neutral target by 2045; approved legislation setting ambitious renewable energy targets for the state through 2050; and supported other bills that created incentives for increased residential, commercial, institutional, and community clean energy projects (mainly solar).

Solar and other renewable energy benefits include reduction of GHG emissions and other air pollutants; improvement of public health; economic development opportunities; community and workforce enhancements; reduced consumer costs; and decreased spending on fossil fuels from out-of-state sources. All this is a long way of saying that we must not stop now, and as the December 2020 Four-Year Climate Action Plan explicitly says, *Maine Can't Wait!* Maine renewable policy has been a positive policy tool in helping to develop a strong renewable energy market and development in the State and should continue to support Maine's renewable energy industry by driving demand for Maine-based renewable resources. LD 1350 amends the RPS procurement law to continue this progress by doing the following:

1. Authorizing additional competitive solicitations by the Maine Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) for contracts with Class IA resources to procure, in total, an amount of energy or renewable energy credits equal to 15% of retail electricity sales in the State during calendar year 2019 with 100% of the energy or renewable energy credits to come from Class IA resources that begin commercial operations after June 30, 2021.
2. Requiring the MPUC to give special consideration to selection of projects in economically depressed areas of the State and to give consideration to evidence of project viability.

In addition to the bill as currently drafted, Acadia Center also supports a friendly amendment to LD 1350 proposed by The Nature Conservancy, Maine Farmland Trust, and Maine Audubon that adds additional criteria to ensure that the MPUC encourages renewable energy that is sited to minimize impacts on Maine's natural and working lands. These initiatives recognize that Maine and the New England region need to focus on building *new* clean energy resources to meet our greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and that the State can rapidly deploy affordable clean energy while directing new development toward places that are most compatible with Maine's natural lands and resources. Acadia Center joins with TNC and others to support LD 1350 with additional consideration of environmental impacts to determine which projects to select for long-term contracts.

Acadia Center urges the Committee to support 1350 and this amendment and looks forward to working on Maine's continuing renewable energy policy strategies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

For more information:

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